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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 003808

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/07/2016
TAGS: [EWWT](#) [JA](#) [KS](#) [PHSA](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: LIANCOURT ROCKS: JAPAN PROTESTS ROK SURVEY

REF: TOKYO 3707

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reason: 1.4(B)(D).

¶1. (C) Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi called in ROK Ambassador Ra Jong Yil on July 5 to protest South Korea's marine survey in the Liancourt Rocks area. According to MOFA Northeast Division Deputy Director Yo Takaba, the protest included both the contested EEZ and the ROK-claimed territorial sea around the islets. In briefing the press after the meeting, unnamed MOFA officials said that Yachi had characterized Korea's decision to conduct the survey, despite Japan's requests not to do so, as "extremely regrettable." According to Takaba, Ambassador Ra responded that he was unable to "accept" the protest, stating that the ROK had an inherent right to conduct the survey because the Liancourt Rocks were Korean territory.

¶2. (C) Takaba characterized Ra's response as unemotional, an impression confirmed when Ra subsequently spoke (in English) to the press. VM Yachi made clear that Japan considered the islets Japanese territory, and that Japan reserved the right to conduct its own survey "at an appropriate time."

¶3. (C) Takaba explained that the origin of the Liancourt Rocks problem stemmed from the inability of the two sides to agree on a proper demarcation of the EEZ. The last meeting in mid-June had concluded without agreement, and another round of talks were anticipated in mid-September. Takaba emphasized that the Government of Japan remained committed to settling the EEZ issue through that negotiating process.

¶4. (C) Takaba added that Japan believed it would be useful to establish with the ROK a "transitional framework," such as existed with China, for conducting the maritime research. The framework, Takaba specified, would have to include prior notification.
SCHIEFFER